



Resistance to Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) – Problem Recognition, Diagnosis and Positive Intervention: A Study on Employee Behavior and Change Management

KEYWORDS

Resistance, Positive Intervention, Employee acceptability

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of human resource information systems (HRIS) approaching the new century, is a noticeable trend within human resource management (HRM). It has been seen that this technology has brought a revolution in the working systems in the organizations and capitalized between the two precious assets, human resource and information technology. The conventional system of working, changed drastically from the way Management Information System (MIS) was practiced upon two decades back and the potential to greatly enhance organizations' ability to collect, store and utilize personnel data. Investment in HRIS in present modern industrial setups is relatively widespread, but the system capabilities are rarely exploited to their full potential. This research explores and the study examines, how this technology could be implemented effectively in the organizations with very less or no resistance to change. Recommendations for consideration in the selection, implementation and evaluation of HRIS introduction, acceptance level and managing acceptability amongst the employees, is the biggest challenge to be handled by the Organizations. With all out efforts the management of an organization has to develop the positive organizational behavior/intervention and if required, even get the professional advice from the HR advisors and consultants to improve upon the acceptability and reduce annoyance towards the new system.

INTRODUCTION

Human capital is the real asset for any organization. This research is based on the behavior of this most important resource 'Human Resource', which reacts differently in different situation when a slight change is introduced in the conventional working system of the organization. The study is based on the introduction of a new human resource information system in an organization and associated change in the behavior of the employees who shows annoyance and rejects the idea of implementation in the first place. There is a clear picture of resistance towards the new system in the organization.

The study on "rejection at first instance", which is an inbuilt human response wherein human mind rejects any new suggestion or innovation in the routine working style or system at first instance and then accepts it slowly with lot of positive interventions after carefully understanding the inputs. Many scholars have worked on change management and rejection by human mind theory.

With the development of this concept & after reviewing some well know published research work of different scholars in the field of innovation, managing change and resistance to change a detailed review of literature was conducted. This research work is based on established models and concepts on resistance to change on which great researchers have produced, published and created an in-depth pool of knowledge.

Change is an empirical observation in an organization which shows variation in the state, shape and quality, Van de Ven & Poole, (1995) after new ways of thinking, acting and operating is introduced Schalk, Campbell and Freese, (1998). The general aim of organization is to see how it adapts the change induced to the environment Barr, Stimpert and Huff, (1992). Child and Smith, (1987). Leana and Barry, (2000) and results in an improvement in performance. Boeker, (1997). Keck and Tushman, (1993).

These are small changes that alter certain small aspects, looking for an improvement in the present situation, but keeping the general working framework. Blumenthal and Haspeslagh, (1994). Goodstein and Burke, (1991). Greiner, (1972). Levy, (1986). Mezas and Glynn, (1993). Nadler and Tushman, (1989). (1990).

The changes are strategic, transformational, and revolutionary. They are radical transformations, where the organiza-

tion totally changes its essential framework (Blumenthal and Haspeslagh, (1994). Ghoshal and Bartlett, (1996). Goodstein and Burke, (1991). Marshak, (1993). Nadler and Tushman, (1989, 1990) looking generally for a new competitive advantage (Hutt, Walker and Frankwick, 1995) and affecting the basic capabilities of the organization (Ruiz and Lorenzo, (1999).

Once the concept of change is introduced in the organization, the term 'resistance to HRIS' is analyzed. On one hand, resistance is a phenomenon that affects the change process, delaying or slowing down its beginning, obstructing or hindering its implementation, and increasing its costs (Ansoff, 1990) on the other hand, resistance is any conduct that tries to keep the status quo, that is to say, resistance is equivalent to inertia, as the persistence to avoid change. Maurer, (1996). Rumelt, (1995) Zaltman and Duncan, (1977). So, inertia and thus resistance are not negative concepts in general, since change is not inherently beneficial for organizations. Even more, resistance could show change managers certain aspects that are not properly considered in the change process (Waddell and Sohal, 1998).

Rumelt (1995), who has divided the sources of resistance into five groups. Certain sources have been added to justify resistance to Rumelt's proposal, so the names of the categories in order to include the new topics have also been altered. Although Rumelt (1995) insists that inertia is a problem in the strategy formulation stage as well as in the implementation one, he does not distinguish the five groups of sources of inertia according to both stages.

Regarding the first group of sources of resistance, change starts with the perception of its need, so a wrong initial perception is the first barrier to change. We call this first group 'distorted perception, interpretation barriers and vague strategic priorities'. It includes: (a) myopia, or inability of the company to look into the future with clarity Barr et al., (1992). Krüger, (1996). Rumelt, (1995). (b) denial or refusal to accept any information that is not expected or desired (Barr et al., (1992) Rumelt, (1995) Starbuck et al., (1978) (c) perpetuation of ideas, meaning the tendency to go on with the present thoughts although the situation has changed Barr et al., (1992). Krüger,, (1996). Rumelt, (1995). Zeffane, (1996). (d) implicit assumptions, which are not discussed due to its implicit character and therefore distort reality (Starbuck, Greve and Hedberg, (1978) (e) communication barriers, that lead to information distortion or misinterpretations (Hutt et al., (1995) and (f) organizational silence, which limits the informa-

tion flow with individuals who do not express their thoughts, meaning that decisions are made without all the necessary information (Morrison and Milliken, (2000). Nemeth, (1997).

The second main group of sources of resistance deals with a low motivation for change. They are identified and divided into five fundamental sources: (a) direct costs of change (Rumelt, (1995). (b) Cannibalization costs, that is to say, change that brings success to a product but at the same time brings losses to others, so it requires some sort of sacrifice (Rumelt, (1995). (c) Cross subsidy comforts, because the need for a change is compensated through the high rents obtained without change with another different factor, so that there is no real motivation for change (Rumelt, (1995). (d) Past failures, which leave a pessimistic image for future changes (Lorenzo, (2000). (e) Different interests among employees and management, or lack of motivation of employees who value change results less than managers value them. Waddell and Sohal, (1998).

The lack of a creative response is the third set of sources of resistance. There are three main reasons that diminish the creativeness in the search for appropriate change strategies: (a) fast and complex environmental changes, which do not allow a proper situation analysis Ansoff, (1990). Rumelt, (1995). (b) Reactive mind-set, resignation, or tendency to believe that obstacles are inevitable (Rumelt, (1995). and (c) inadequate strategic vision or lack of clear commitment of top management to changes Rumelt, (1995). Waddell & Sohal, (1998).

Sources of Resistance and Inertia in the stage implementation is the critical step between the decision to change and the regular use of it at the organization (Klein & Sorra, (1996). In this stage, two more resistance groups can be found. The first of them deals with political and cultural deadlocks to change. It consists of: (a) implementation climate and relation between change values and organizational values, considering that a strong implementation climate when the values' relation is negative will result in resistance and opposition to change Klein and Sorra, (1996). Schalk et al., (1998). (b) Departmental politics or resistance from those departments that will suffer with the change implementation (Beer & Eisenstat, (1996). Beer et al., (1990). Rumelt, (1995). (c) Incommensurable beliefs, or strong and definitive disagreement among groups about the nature of the problem and its consequent alternative solutions (Klein and Sorra, (1996). Rumelt, (1995). Zeffane, (1996). (d) Deep rooted values and emotional loyalty (Krüger, (1996). Nemeth, (1997). Strebel, (1994). (e) Forgetfulness of the social dimension of changes (Lawrence, (1954). Schalk et al., (1998).

Last but not least, a set of five sources of resistance with different characteristics have been bunched together around the last group of sources of resistance: (a) leadership inaction, sometimes because leaders are afraid of uncertainty, sometimes for fear of changing the status quo (Beer and Eisenstat, (1996). Burdett, (1999). Hutt et al., (1995). Kanter, (1989). Krüger, (1996). Maurer, (1996). Rumelt, (1995). (b) Embedded routines (Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Rumelt, (1995). Starbuck et al., (1978). (c) Collective action problems, specially dealing with the difficulty to decide who is going to move first or how to deal with free-riders (Rumelt, (1995). (d) Lack of the necessary capabilities to implement change – capabilities gap – (Rumelt, (1995). and (e) cynicism Maurer, (1996). Reichers, Wanous and Austin, (1997). After this theoretical exposition, the objectives of the empirical research will be conducted. The progress will be with the methodology of the research and the description of sample.

STUDY BACKGROUND & FRAMEWORK:

Human Resource Information System (HRIS): Since the advancement of technology and the growth of advanced level computers a clear bent towards it was visible. Things started changing since early 1960's when first full system was developed and introduced to the organization, after which the development is seen all around in leaps and bounds.

This research will review the major components of a Human Resource Information System (HRIS), including systems that are computerized and those, that are not. (Kenneth A. Kovach, Charles E. Cathcart) in their article "Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS): Providing Business with Rapid Data Access, Information Exchange and Strategic Advantage." In Journal 'Maritime Crew and Payroll' explained about the system. The basic components of computerization provide a foundation for the reader to understand and explore how computerized and non-computerized information can assist human resources (HR) professionals achieve certain human resource objectives.

Kovach et al., (1999) presented the three major functional components in any HRIS by giving the model below:
Input Data - Maintenance – Output.

Many computer softwares are available to help in developing a comprehensive human resource information system. There is no doubt that personal computers can support real human resource decisions, but the information must be available in a form that can be utilized effectively in the decision making process.

A Human Resource Information System is a systematic procedure for collecting, storing, maintaining, retrieving, and validating data needed by an organization about its human resources, personnel activities, and organization units. Wright and Dyer (2000) present a similar line of reasoning: e-business is emerging, and therefore HR and HR professionals are faced with the challenge of performing in ways that are in line with the business.

An HRIS need not be complex computerized system. HRIS can be as informal as the payroll records and time cards of a small business, or as extensive and formal as the computerized human resource databases of major manufacturers, banks, and governments. HRIS can support long range planning, with information for labor force planning, and supply and demand forecasts; staffing with information on equal employment, separations, and applicant qualifications; and development with information on training program costs and trainee work performance. HRIS can also support compensation programs with information on pay increases, salary forecasts and pay budgets and labor/employee relations with information on contract negotiations and employee assistance need. In every case the purpose is to provide information that is either required by human resource stakeholders or supports human resource decisions.

Process and acceptance:

With the widespread division of information technology on a global scale, increasingly it has been witnessed that essentially the same technology is being used in many different cultures Calhoun, Kenneth J., Teng, James T. C. and Cheon, Myun Joong(2002) The system once integrated with any of the customized computerized practices in an organization from hiring to placing on the payroll, the work force can be tracked up to the exit from the organization. Once the employee was hired and placed, the application could be used to provide some information to the respective department in a click of a button. It's a boon for the employers and they view this information as necessary but not particularly valuable from a strategic viewpoint. But for employee or work force this new working style once introduced, is a hard work & extra learning and acceptance, resulting to some annoyance towards the employer and system as a whole.

Here the group of good but, untrained workers who had less exposure on the system or new style of working, shifts to avoiding or not accepting the new system, finding faults in the system, showing resistance towards learning and finally creating rift and exit. Timely training and attitude shift, pro system advice, gives the work force some learning and better acceptance. In the process some behaviors appear to change to take advantage of the technology, while others, particularly those associated with the cultural preference, or those

having old school attitude towards accepting change do not appear to accept or welcome the change.
Annoyance towards change:

Annoyance towards change seems to start when goals are neither clear nor realistic to immediate managers and employees when they aim for HRIS implementation or system integration.

When the implementation route map is not clear and the real needs of the managers and executives are not considered before implementing the processes then, the expected results do not emerge or are shown to be unrealistic and it all seems to be too technology-driven. HRIS is an innovation in terms of HRM. In the first place, because of the opportunities it creates to put employee-management relationships in the hands of the employees, executives and managers. In the second place, because information technology creates possibilities to design HRM tools and instruments that would not be possible without this information technology. A good example is advanced personal assessment and measurement tools that can be used at any moment of the day, and in any location. Employees really can begin to steer their careers with a click of a mouse.

HR professionals have to realize and accept this and teach & train before implementing, that once introduced it will not go away. It is probable that we won't even need to point this out in a few years time. The acceptance will be seen as stating the obvious!

Overall, the curiosity is not yet satisfied actually, technology development is only at a preliminary stage regarding the relationship between HRIS and HRM in organizations. There is a lack of a good theory linking the relationship between technology and HR developments. This research project has laid a basis, but further developments would be judged and suggestions would be welcome.

Further research is also needed on the theory concerning the staged approach to HRIS. Is there a need for growth or planning, how should it be implemented, what are the real effects and benefits in the longer term, and how does it influence the role of the HR department. All of this to avoid possible annoyance! And create stages of acceptance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper is an attempt to conduct the study on resistance to HRIS. To conduct an entry level research, a pilot survey was conducted on resistance to HRIS. The questionnaire was prepared to test the employees on the following variables;

Motivation Level
Training
Satisfaction
Attitude

All these above mentioned variables were tested on Resistance towards HRIS. There is a scope of further study in the above model and the hypotheses can be built on the above dependent variables. The test can be conducted to verify the relation between the variables present in the theoretical framework. Deeper research is needed on the above model on rejection and acceptance of HRIS introduced in any area of working. After the study and with a positive intervention approach few positive suggestions were given in order to minimize the effect of rejection after diagnosing the problems related to acceptance of HRIS.

Research Design

A descriptive non parametric research design was used in this study. The focus of this study was to investigate interventions taken while introducing HRIS and its impact on the relationship of independent and dependent variables. Relevant literature review was conducted to select the variables.

In-depth understanding and insights were provided by the research which resulted in the recommendations of necessary steps that could be undertaken.

Measurement of Variables: Chi square test was applied for the descriptive questionnaire which was developed purposefully to study the objectives needed to be fulfilled by the employees when change is introduced in the working style. The resistance to HRIS and implementation success in the organizations was the focus of the study where the respondent were tested on the variables by answering 'yes', 'no' or 'unsure'.

Data Collection: In this research primary data was collected by preparing a descriptive questionnaire using questions carefully set to test the respondent on the selected variables. The unit of analysis is individual employees.

Sampling Size: The employees who work in organizations where HRIS was introduced were selected to give their responses on the questions asked on resistance to HRIS. In this study a BPO was selected. The questionnaire was sent to 150 employees but only 62 filled questionnaires were found to be valid. The age of the employees varied between 21 years to 35 years. As per the position of the employees involved around 75% of the employees were of executive level. Only 25% of the employees were senior level executives.

DATA ANALYSIS

The survey was conducted in the company where the HRIS was introduced. The reaction of the employees on rejection and acceptance is explained in detail. Chi Square test was conducted on few carefully selected and asked questions.

Motivation Level:

When tested on motivation level 92.2% respondents answered in favor of learning the new system, only 7.8% were unsure about the introduced change. This is a valid indication that the manager's intervention was necessary for the success of HRIS implementation.

On rejecting or feeling happy learning new HRIS system: 82.8 % respondents were in favor of learning the system once introduced in the organization. Only 14.1% respondents were not happy with the learning and 3.1% were not sure of the objective and goal to be achieved after learning HRIS system.

Training:

Training before the introduction of Human Resource Information System (HRIS): Only 48.4 percent of the respondents had some clue about the system. The negative response was alarmingly high around 37.5% where 14.1% employees were unsure about training need. This seems to indicate that the line managers do not thoroughly ensure proper training before change is induced.

Comfort level with the old system or readiness for new: On the comfort level of the system where respondents were questioned by the researcher whether they are ready to learn new system; 62.5% showed interest and were ready for new. But 7.8% rejected and 29.7% were not sure. It's the lookout of the line managers to convert these 29.7% towards learning the new system.

On willingness for a systematic training program in learning HRIS: 81.3% respondents were open for the systematic training program and were willing to learn and adjust according to the change induced. 9.4% were unsure and needed proper guidance on adopting the training program. Only 9.4% showed their unwillingness to learn it through systematic training program.

Satisfaction:

On general perception according to them about the new system in the company: 89% accepted the new system introduced in the company. Only 10.9% were unsure of the new system due to different reasons lack of skills, peer attitude, lack of motivation & no immediate benefits.

On attachment of learning the new system with incentive or reward after completion: 75% were positive about it and took the training as a challenge. Only 6.3% were not sure and 18.8% totally rejected the idea and were not willing to accept the challenge.

Attitude:

On attitude of the manager being positive on learning HRIS system towards employee: 40.6% of respondents were of the view that the manager was positive and helpful but 17.2% were not of the same opinion. For them the managers were not at all showing interest on learning HRIS. 42.2% seem to be unsure about their manager's attitude.

On manager's openness towards employee problems: The question was put to the respondents and around 75% were in favor of the line managers 20.3% were unsure and only 4.7% said that the managers were not open to discuss their problems. Here the managers can convert the unsure 20.3%

of the respondents in their favor just by attending to them and explaining them the importance of learning and benefits attached to learning of HRIS.

On feeling of burden learning the new system: On the question of feeling burdened 25% respondent answered in positive. Out of remaining 75% respondents 64.1% said that they are motivated and will not feel burdened learning HRIS and will support implementation. 10.9% were unsure but they sounded positive with a very little resistance.

On introduction of HRIS and compulsory learning of the software will be pressure enough on them to look for a new job: On compulsory learning during introduction of new system 43.8% respondents answered 'yes' they would prefer exit. 56.3% respondents including 9.4% of 'unsure' response were positive and said 'No' on leaving the organization. They seem to be motivated enough to learn the new system.

Chi Square Analysis Table - 1

Sr. No.	Statement	Response	Frequency	Percent %	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.	Null Hypothesis
1	Did you get proper training before the introduction of Human Resource Information System (HRIS) in your organization?	Yes	31	48.4	11.844a	2	0.003	Rejected
		No	24	37.5				
		Unsure	9	14.1				
2	Do you feel like rejecting or felt happy learning new HRIS system	Happy	53	82.8	71.656a	2	0.000	Rejected
		Not Happy	9	14.1				
		Unsure	2	3.1				
3	Are you more comfortable with the old system or ready for new?	Yes (Ready for new)	40	62.5	29.094a	2	0.000	Rejected
		No	5	7.8				
		Unsure	19	29.7				
4	Do you feel motivated learning new system introduced recently in your organization?	Yes	59	92.2	45.563b	1	0.000	Rejected
		Unsure	5	7.8				
		-	-	-				
5	Is the attitude of your manager positive on learning HRIS system?	Yes	26	40.6	7.531a	2	0.023	Rejected
		No	11	17.2				
		Unsure	27	42.2				
6	Is your manager open to your problems?	Yes	48	75.0	52.344a	2	0.000	Rejected
		No	3	4.7				
		Unsure	13	20.3				
7	What is the general perception according to you about the new system in the company?	Accepted	57	89.1	39.063b	1	0.000	Rejected
		Unsure	7	10.9				
		-	-	-				
8	Do you feel burdened learning the new system?	Yes	16	25.0	29.094a	2	0.000	Rejected
		No	41	64.1				
		Unsure	7	10.9				
9	Is introduction of HRIS and compulsory learning of the software will be pressure enough on you to look for a new job?	Yes	28	43.8	16.625a	2	0.000	Rejected
		No	30	46.9				
		Unsure	6	9.4				
10	Are you open for a systematic training program in learning HRIS	Yes	52	81.3	66.125a	2	0.000	Rejected
		No	6	9.4				
		Unsure	6	9.4				
11	Should learning be attached to incentive or reward after completion?	Yes	48	75	51.500a	2	0.000	Rejected
		No	12	18.8				
		Unsure	4	6.3				

The Null hypothesis was rejected in all the cases hence the difference in frequencies were found to be significant.

- a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 21.3.
b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 32.0.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

The Null hypotheses was rejected @ $\alpha = 0.95$ in all the cases hence the research data was found to be significant. Mainly by completing the pilot research on the related issue and after the review of literature of different scholars and researchers on the same and related topics it was an observation that introduction of HRIS plays an essential role in the development of the organization and if introduced in a systematic way leads to less resistance by the employees.

It is evident from the study and the work on this research that the resistance needs to be recognized and diagnosed clearly by the line heads or HR heads of the organization. Once the relation is established that the resistance & annoyance exists due to innovative system, few remedial actions should be taken by the management. As recommended by Hong and Kim (2002), Change management initiative can be treated as an independent variable in predicting the success of the transformational initiatives. Few very important interventions are suggested here for the reduction and minimization of the resistance effect on the basis of the models selected on which the study is based.

Identify, or hire, change leaders having roles mainly to deliver the change. This can be either out sourced or the change leaders can be developed in the organization before the introduction of the system.

Look at your organizational structure, job descriptions, and performance and compensation systems to ensure they're in line with the vision. Kotter, John P. (1995). The organizational structure needs to be studied carefully before handing the new system to the change leaders.

Identify people who are resisting the change, and help them see what's needed. The resistance to HRIS introduction

needs to be recognized, diagnosed to the very root level and then with a very careful and positive intervention the change needs to be introduced by the line managers or the change leaders.

Take action to quickly remove barriers (human or otherwise).

After identifying or hiring change managers and by inducing proper change induction and training, measurable reduction can be seen.

It has to be implemented by rewarding change acceptors.

Proper training to be induced to facilitate acceptance towards changing system and environment.

Skilled change inspectors, Luthans, (2002). Psychological expert help and managerial communication are required before inducing change of a magnitude of affecting the whole system.

Values, mindsets and capabilities, of employees, Krüger, W. (1996) should be considered and properly understood.

A skillful handling of Human Resource is a necessity and can be graded as one of the most important positive intervention. Kotter, John P. (1995). Creating urgency in the organization, forming a powerful coalition amongst employees, Creating a vision for change, Communicating the vision to all, Removing obstacles, Creating short-term wins and building on the change are the eight steps to be considered while innovating change. Kotter, opined that with these interventions acceptance amongst employees can be created and desired results can be achieved.

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